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## The Factors Human Resource Managers Use to Determine Whether They Are Going to Hire a College Graduate and How They Communicate Their Expectations and Qualifications

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### Abstract

My research identified the primary factors that human resource managers use when hiring college graduates and explore how the factors are communicated. Through an exhaustive literature review, it has been determined that human resource managers use resume screening, interviews, and written performance tests to determine whether a college graduate is qualified for the job. Several database systems were examined using different search terms to produce research the following results. Resume screenings will determine if the candidate has any experience in the job area. The interview process will determine communications skills as well as job performance abilities. Lastly, written tests are given to also determine job performance skills.

There are three factors that the methods are used to identify. A college graduate's major is identified with the resume screening. The interviewing skills are obviously determined by the interview itself. Finally, the college graduate's job experience is determined through the resume screening, interview, and the written performance test. These methods are supposed to rank the college graduate's overall ability to complete the job successfully by meeting the qualifications. These qualifications are sought out by human resource managers through the job analytical process. Afterwards these qualifications are put into what is called a job description.

This job description is how human resource managers communicate what is expected of job candidates. Job descriptions are supposed to depict the epitome of an employer who would be successful in that specific job area. If job descriptions are done accurately, college graduates should be able to use them to determine if they are qualified for the job and if they would be successful in undergoing the hiring methods of the human resource managers. My research is intended to identify the factors human resource managers use and how they are being communicated. This conceptual paper is significant because college graduates may be prepared to enter the workforce if they are aware of the expectations.

## Introduction

Every year, college graduates begin their search for the perfect career. For college graduates to be successful, an understanding of what human resource managers are looking for is important. My research will use the hiring process to determine key qualities that college graduates must have and display when looking for an occupation along with how human resource managers are communicating what they are looking for to college graduates. Important hiring factors and communication methods will be determined through an extended and critical literature review using previous dissertations along with journal articles, books, reference books, and secondary and tertiary sources. Ultimately, this inquiry is intended to determine what human resource managers are looking for in college graduates and how they are communicating what they are looking for.

## Problem Statement

An exploration of what human resource managers are looking for when hiring college graduates address the following problem; College graduates may be unprepared for the workforce because an understanding of what is expected of them is miscommunicated. According to the society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), “We will experience a 33 percent shortfall of degreed candidates by 2012—that is 6 million graduates short to fill new jobs and replace retirees” (Benjamin 2003, p.14). This indication is based on the fact that SHRM believes that managers are having problems attracting new candidates. If human resource managers are communicating what they are looking for effectively, then this problem may not exist and more college graduates may be hired.

## Purpose of Inquiry and Inquiry Questions

The purpose of this inquiry is to identify what primary factors human resource managers use when hiring college graduates and to explore how the factors are communicated. Given this purpose statement and given the problem statement, the following questions will be addressed in this conceptual paper:

1. What are the primary factors human resource managers use when hiring college graduates?
2. How do human resource managers communicate their hiring expectations to college graduates?

## Significance of Inquiry

An explanation of the hiring and communication factors is significant for two reasons. First, graduates may not get jobs because they do not fully understand what HRM are looking for. Second, findings may begin to close the gap between what HRMs are looking for, how they communicate what they are looking for, and what graduates think HRMs are looking for. Human resource managers need to

communicate what they are looking for effectively to college graduates. This will help both the employer and employee in the long run. According to Rodriguez (2005), “job descriptions reduce the chance for misunderstanding between employer and employee and reveals expectations that are required for the employee,” (p.64). Additionally, hired college graduates will be better suited for positions if they understand job descriptions and if human resource managers rank their hiring factors based on the content of job descriptions.

## Summary of Theoretical Framework

This conceptual paper is anchored in The Success System Model (Bowin & Harvey, 1996). This model was appropriate for this conceptual paper because it explains how human resource managers construct what they are looking for in a certain job position holder and what they do to attract and hire specific employees to complete the job. The model has seven steps that include anticipating, attracting, developing, motivating, maintaining, changing, and focusing. For the purposes of this paper, steps two and five were looked at in large. This conceptual paper will use steps two (attracting) and five (maintaining) to give an explanation of what human resource managers expect of college graduates and how they communicate this.

## Delimitations of the Inquiry

There were delimitations within this inquiry. Because this inquiry did not look at professional students, the primary factors that HRM use to are limited to undergraduate students. Additionally, not looking at all the hiring factors might exclude other important factors that are not primary. Future delimitations may include not surveying professional students and not surveying students from more than one college. The delimitations are rational based on a study conducted by Garcia (2005) where critical factors in hiring, promoting, and designing job descriptions were explored.

## Limitations of the Inquiry

The limitations of this study include but are not limited to my experience and time constraints. Additionally, time was limited and the information might not be developed as thoroughly as it should be. These are legitimate limitations according to Essentials of Research Methods: a Guide to Social Science. Future limitations might include my theoretical framework. This might also create a bias in the information that is looked at.

## Analysis and Discussion of the Literature

This chapter offers the review of literature as it relates to the topic of this conceptual paper. The first section of this chapter describes how human resource managers communicate their qualifications and expectations to college graduates. The second section discusses the different hiring practices human resource managers

use. Lastly, the third section uses a previous given survey to describe the objectives human resource managers are trying to fulfill with each hiring method.

### **Literature on Communication Strategies**

This section will discuss the demand for college graduates in the job market and how important communication between them and HRM is. Then the purpose of the selection process will be discussed which will lead into how human resource managers communicate with college students when they become job candidates. Lastly, job analysis and descriptions will be described and the purposes for each will be explained.

#### ***The Demand for College Graduates as Job Candidates***

Human resource managers (HRMs) use several methods when recruiting and hiring job candidates. Among the candidates that are in the employment market exist new college graduates. For example, “early indications suggest the college Class of 2008 will find healthy demand for its services, according to data from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)” (Eversole, 2008, p.34). Because of this, college grads must be educated on what HRMs are looking for when considering whether or not they will hire a specific candidate. “The job market for new college graduates has been gathering strength over the last several years, and this year we’re seeing that trend continue,” said Marilyn Mackes, NACE executive director, in a statement (Eversole, 2008, p.34). However, if these grads don’t meet the expectations and requirements of HRMs, then the trend will be destroyed. Business professionals expect that there will be a 16% increase of hired college grads in 2008 than in 2007 (Eversole, 2008). Human resource managers need to communicate their expectations so that college graduates know what they need to be prepared for when entering the job market.

#### ***The Purpose of Employee Selection***

“Employee selection processes should focus on employing the ‘right people’ to get the job done (Yusko & Goldstein, 2006, p.176). Regardless of the specific selection method chosen, each candidate should have displayed high levels of job performance abilities. When Human Resource Managers hire the “wrong person,” they lose large sums of money (Richards, n.d.). Money spent on job advertisement, managerial fees, and training fees all go down the drain. However, if an employee who helps reach the overall goals of the business is hired, the money will be gained. Therefore, when HRMs are hiring future employees, they should, “be clear about the job/person fit” (Richards, n.d., p.1). According to the Society for Human Resource Management, “we will experience a 33 percent shortfall of degreed candidates by 2012—that is 6 million graduates short to fill new jobs and replace retirees,” (Benjamin, 2003, p.1). Managers are not attracting the right candidates for the job. This error stems from bad employee selection practices. If human resource managers were to focus more on creating better ways to communicate the specifics

of the job instead of creating the ideal job and discussing benefits, better employees will be hired (Benjamin, 2003, p.1).

### ***The Role of Job Analysis and Job Descriptions***

The primary aspect of developing a good job description lies in an accurate job analysis (Golob, 2002). The job analysis is used to determine what the applicant needs to be successful in the position. The job analysis helps human resource managers create a job description. Human resource managers use job descriptions to communicate with college graduates when they enter the job market.

The blame for poor recruitment lies with those who do the hiring (Davis, 2005, p.3). Sometimes employers don’t make it very clear in the job descriptions the specific details, duties, and requirements of the job. “Job descriptions provide an indication of what the job requires,” and too many employees quit/get fired because they were unaware of all the requirements to complete the job successfully (Davis, 2005, p.3). Job descriptions should be given to applicants prior to their recruit (Cartwright, 2005). This way, they know exactly what they are getting themselves into.

Another role of the job description is to also make sure that the job candidate knows the overall goals of the company and if he or she can successfully contribute to the accomplishment of these goals (Cartwright, 2005). And so, this will ultimately, “help job candidates choose more effectively among job offers,” (Cartwright, 2005, p. 312). Lastly, the job description will act as an evaluation of whether or not the job candidate will be able to do the job. “The job description are tools which can not only aid the employer in finding the appropriate person to fill a job opening, but can also help guide the employee during his or her time with the business,” (Hillstrom, & Hillstrom, 1988, p.325). Human resource managers can use this up against resumes and all other method to see if requirements are met.

### **Literature on Hiring Practices in the United States**

This section will discuss the resume screening practice that is done by human resource managers when hiring college graduates. Next, the interview process will be discussed and how important the job candidate’s need for succession in this area is. Lastly, the written test method will be discussed and how this method is ranked will be described.

#### ***Resume Screening***

Resume screening is the first step that isolates the better candidate for the job (Richards, n.d.). Without this step, employers would spend a great deal of time on recruiting individuals who aren’t capable of completing the job. This step determines if job candidates meet basic requirements such as specific job experiences or skills. Resume screening is used to open the door as to if the candidate is even qualified for the job. They are ranked, “based on content (i.e. job relevant skills and experiences)” (Hunt, 2007, p.55). However, this step does not guarantee a candidate the job.

### ***Interview Process***

“Interviews have been researched perhaps more than any other selection device,” (Yusko & Goldstein, 2006, p.201). They are the most common method used by human resource managers when hiring employees because they test performance abilities (Hunt, 2007). “The interview approach has the potential to yield a rich mosaic of information about a candidate’s knowledge, skill, and ability level, his/her likelihood of engaging in positive organizational citizenship behavior, and the degree of to which the applicant fits with the organization” (Yusko & Goldstein, 2006, p.201). “Most managers will not hire candidates without first interviewing them in person,” (Hunt, 2007, p. 52). Structured interviews (interviews with clear questions that every candidate answers and the answers are ranked with levels of job performance) are the more appropriate type (Hunt, 2007). These interviews ask motivational (determines plans), situational (determines what he or she would do in certain job related situations), and behavioral (determines what he or she has done in past job related situations) questions (Hunt, 2007).

“Many interviews involve rating a set of competencies such as analysis, leadership, planning, and organizing,” (Yusko & Goldstein, 2006, p.206) Job candidates are rated in these categories, which give the human resource managers an idea on whether or not they are eligible for the job. Human resource managers also use these interviews to pay close attention to how well the employee listens and responds to the questions (The Interview Process: Selecting the “Right” Person, n.d.) Lastly, interviews help the employer get a better idea of who the candidate is. This means that key personality traits can be determined here (Richards, n.d.). Personality traits can also determine if a candidate is right for the job or not.

### ***Written Test Performance***

Written tests focus on job performance abilities (Hunt, 2007). This method is the most commonly used method of the HRM hiring process. “These test scores provide information on how well an individual is capable of performing the job,” (Yusko & Goldstein, 2006, p.182). To make sure this is done, the validity process makes sure that the test is measuring what is supposed to as opposed to other unnecessary things (Yusko & Goldstein, 2006). This is why an organization should always seek the advice of an employee testing service or a state employment agency before administering tests (Hillstrom & Hillstrom, 1988). The test should not lead to any type of discrimination problems. It should just be used as a determinant as to what the candidate knows about the job itself (Hillstrom & Hillstrom, 1988).

## **Literature on HRM Objectives**

### ***What Top Entry Employers Want***

In an effort to understand what objectives HRM are looking to meet under their hiring methods, in 2008, a Survey was done at the State College in PA to

determine what top entry employers want the most from potential employees. The following was found:

- #1 – The student’s major (44%)
- #2 – The student’s interviewing skills (18%)
- #3 – The student’s internship/experience (17%)
- #4 – The college the student graduated from (10%)
- #5 – Other miscellaneous qualifications (5%)
- #6 – The student’s GPA (4%)
- #7 – The student’s personal appearance (1%)
- #8 – The student’s computer skills (1%)

As determined from the information above, the three dominant factors that human resource managers look for are an applicant’s major, interviewing skills, and previous internships/experiences. However, these three factors were very brief and general. The factors are sub-categories of the Hiring methods. For example, HRMs do look at a college grad’s major; however, this would be incorporated in the resume screening of the hiring process. In addition, the college grad’s interviewing skills would be determined in the interviewing portion of the hiring process. Lastly, the college graduate’s internships/experiences would be determined in the resume screening, interview, and the written portions of the hiring process. This information demonstrates the sub-categories that human resource managers look for under their specific hiring methods. Together, these methods and sub-categories help determine whether or not a job candidate is qualified for the job.

## **Methods for Collecting and Analyzing the Literature**

This conceptual paper is based solely on a review and analysis of research and data from the literature. Several methods were used to collect and analyze the literature. Because several database hits and books were available, a reading of abstracts and tables of contents were done so that all sources used would be relevant to this study. Additionally, references were looked at for extra sources.

First research was conducted using Frostburg State University’s Library Research port. No specific database was used. Terms such as “human resource management,” “qualifications,” “hiring,” and “recruitment” were used. These terms were too broad and a limited amount of sources were available to me. However, there were many pieces of literature that dealt with hiring practices that human resource managers use found. Of these included a survey that was submitted to collegegrad.com that listed the results of what top level employers were looking for when hiring a college graduate. At the time, this was the most important source because it was straight forward.

Next, the University of Maryland at College Park’s research port was investigated. Several databases were researched including ABI, Business Search Premiere, Lexis Nexis, and specifically the Human Resource Management database. Here different dissertations were found and so were excerpts from scholarly journals. Specifically,



articles dealing with hiring methods and practices were found using terms such as “human resource management hiring college graduates” and “communication and hiring.” It was found that using quotations around whole phrases and titles along with asterisks in front of word bases made it easier to find information pertaining to my specific topic. These search methods made narrowed my sources. The most important source found here was a dissertation done by Andy Rodriguez entitled “Critical Factors in Hiring, Promoting, and Designing Job Descriptions for Strategic Project Managers.” This dissertation helped me with some of my definitions as well as information regarding this conceptual paper.

Lastly, journals and books were looked at in the University of Maryland at College Park’s McKledin Library. These sources were found in the stacks area on the fifth and sixth floor. Information that was provided on Research Port was used to locate the books. Books were just skimmed through also to find information that was relevant. Many sources were not found using this method but those that were found were very useful. For example, “Human Resource Management: An Exponential Approach” was found. The theoretical framework for this conceptual paper was located in this book.

### **Data Collection and Data Sources for Future Research**

This is a conceptual paper that is based solely on a review of literature on the topic of the factors that human resource managers use when hiring college graduates and how they communicate this information. Little empirical evidence to determine what college graduates think human resource managers are looking for exists and this is why my paper is significant. For future research, a quantitative study will be conducted to compare what was found in my literature review with what college students think. According to Ruane (2005), surveys are appropriate for social research. Human resource management is a social science.

A survey will be distributed to college students ages 18 to 22 asking them to rank different factors that they see as important when going for a job. This specific age group is selected because these are the most common ages of college students. The information will determine if a correlation between what human resource managers want and what college students think they want exists. This will determine if human resource managers need to be educated on how to communicate with job candidates and if college students are being prepared for the workforce as college graduates. The survey will be constructed based off of the State College of PA’s survey that was distributed to human resource managers who measured what they thought was more important when hiring college graduates.

For ethical reasons, Collegegrad.com will be contacted and asked if I could use a sample of their survey for my study. According to Ruane (2005), each participant should be asked to sign a consent form stating that they agree to take the survey and be apart of the study. Signing a consent form will give participants the opportunity to decide if they would like to participate without being forced.

### **Data Analysis Strategies for Future Research**

Since future research will rely on a survey, demographic questions will be answered so that results can be separated based on male and female. In addition to this averages will be calculated to determine frequencies of what factors were chosen as more important than others. This information will be compared with what is known from the literature review about what factors human resource managers think are most important. This comparison will determine if HRM and college students are on the same thought path or if discrepancies occur. According to Ruane (2005), this research method is called a correlation design.

### **Strategies for Minimizing Bias and Error**

#### ***Strategies Related to this Inquiry***

To minimize bias and error related to this inquiry, different database systems were reviewed. Business and Human Resource Management database systems were both looked at using several search terms. Research was done at two different libraries so information would be different. The use of different search terms helped produce a Literature Review that would come from different stand points of literature. Additionally, the information that was developed through the literature review was sorted through and organized to represent a pattern of importance based on redundancy. According to Ruane (2005), the process is called replication.

#### ***Strategy Related to Future Inquiry***

Future Inquiry will be completed through a survey given to college students from ages 18–22. In an effort to minimize bias an error, a small blurb will be at the top of the survey asking all participants to rate the factors as honestly as possible. The age range that the survey will be distributed to will also minimize bias and error because the information will come from participants who vary in age. The survey will also be distributed to both male and female and people with different other demographic information. The procedures will add to the variances of the answers to the survey which will ultimately minimize bias and error.

### **Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Research**

#### ***Findings from the Literature***

An analytical literature review helped develop a thorough understanding in this conceptual paper. The literature answered the following questions:

*What are the primary factors human resource managers use when hiring college graduates?*

#### **FINDING 1:**

Human resource managers use resume screens, interviews, and written performance test to determine if they will hire a college graduate.

The three methods help rank the candidates' ability to complete the job. 'Organizations that intend to compete through people must invest in a selection process geared specifically towards bringing members into the organization.' Basically, human resource managers must use hiring methods that will attract job candidates that can contribute to the overall goals of the organization successfully. This is an example of the "attracting" step of The Success System Model (Bowin & Harvey, 1996, p.7-9).

#### FINDING 2:

When college graduates enter the job market as candidates, specific factors such as their college major, interview skills, and job experience are determined through the above mentioned hiring methods.

Human resource managers use resume screenings to determine the job candidate's college major and job experiences. Interviews can determine job experiences along with interviewing skills such as how well the candidate listens and answers the questions. Lastly, written performance tests can also determine job experiences and job performance capabilities.

*How do human resource managers communicate their hiring expectations to college graduates?*

#### FINDING:

Human resource managers communicate what they are looking for to college graduates using job descriptions.

"Job descriptions reduces the chance for misunderstanding between employer and employee and reveals expectations that are required from the employee," (Rodriguez, 2005, p.64). The job description gives the qualifications and expectations of the job. They give employers a criterion to go by using hiring methods and help employees decide if the job at hand is for them. However, successful job descriptions can only be developed through a thorough job analysis which is also completed by human resource managers. This line of communication is an example of The Success System Model (Bowin & Harvey, 1996, p.7-9), where human resource managers and employees communicate to minimize error.

### Conclusions

This conceptual paper has reviewed the three most commonly used employee selection methods used by human resource managers (resume screening, interviewing, written tests). The resume screening gives the HRM the opportunity to isolate the good job candidates from the bad. A good resume is also the first step for a candidate to show that he or she is qualified for the job. HRM use structured interviews to get a better understanding of the candidate's background as well as future and present job relating skills. Lastly, written tests are used to determine the candidate's understanding of the job and ability to do the job. With these three methods, HRMs are capable of hiring the appropriate candidate for the job who will help achieve the overall goals of the organization. "Many organizations still

make selection decisions primarily based on resume screens and interviews," (Yusko & Goldstein, 2006, p.200).

Because the college graduates of today will soon contribute to the job market of tomorrow, they need to be fully aware of what their future employers are looking for. In addition to this, future employers will have a better time hiring the right employees if they meet the job requirements and expectations of the human resource managers. With this being said, job descriptions are necessary to communicate qualifications and expectations of human resource managers to college graduates. This way, college graduates will know that they need to have certain majors, interviewing skills, and experiences to be successful in the job market.

### Recommendations for Future Research

For future research a study on if hiring methods are successful should be done. Focus groups of organizations with high turnover rates and low turnover rates should be looked at to determine what specific hiring methods work and do not work. This study is very essential to my research because it digs deeper into the hiring practice that human resource managers use. The purpose of this conceptual paper aimed to define the hiring methods and factors that these methods sought after. Determining whether these practices are successful would ultimately determine if human resource managers need to change their recruitment strategies.

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## African American Vernacular English

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### Abstract

African American Vernacular English (AAVE) causes reading problems for majority of the African American students who speak it. There is a strong concern of whether African Americans will perform adequately on the job front, due to low reading levels (Rickford, 1999). Although AAVE is a dialect shared by many African Americans, they need to be able to have proficient Standard English in order to move forward and become successful in America (Rickford, 1999). African Americans have been, and still are performing poorly in reading and have very low academic achievement throughout the nation (Rickford, 1999). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems theory was used to determine possible factors contributing to the reading problems that AAVE speaking children face when trying to learn Standard English. For the purposes of this inquiry, of the four systems in the theory only the microsystems and mesosystems were analyzed. In order to gain a healthy understanding of African American Vernacular English and majority of its topics, an extensive amount of literature review and scholarly articles read and analyzed. The results discovered from the literature were that there are three main reasons why AAVE speaking students have reading problems.

### Problem Statement

While these issues are important, this paper will focus on AAVE and education. Although AAVE is a dialect shared by many African Americans, they need to be able to have proficient Standard English in order to move forward in America (Rickford, 1999). African Americans have been, and still are performing poorly in reading and have very low academic achievement throughout the nation. Speaking AAVE is a contributing factor to the lack of advancement in academics in African American students (Rickford, 1999). Several experts such as Rickford (1999), Baratz (1969), Granger (1976), and Stewart (1969) have declared that the best thing to do to help solve this problem is to reach African American students where they are, meaning, teach them Standard English using their own dialect as a foundation. However, this suggestion has not been highly regarded by many people as the best method.

### Purpose of Inquiry

The purpose of this paper is to explain some of the reasons AAVE speaking students are hindered when learning Standard English. This paper also supports